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Chair

Mrs. Karen Vecchio

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to welcome everybody to our 103rd meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. As a reminder, this meeting is being televised today.

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), we're going to commence our study on the main estimates of 2018-19: votes 1 and 5 under the Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women, referred to the committee on April 17, 2018.

For this reason, we are pleased to have with us today the Honourable Maryam Monsef, the Minister of Status of Women. She is joined by Nancy Gardiner, Senior Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations; and Anik Lapointe, Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director, Corporate Services.

Minister, I'm going to turn the floor over to you for the next 10 minutes.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is a privilege to be with you on this unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples, and on this particularly important day.

On May 24, 1918, I'm sure it seemed that the government of the day had finally recognized that women had a role to play in the government and the governance of this country, but there were more milestones to come. It would be another 12 years before the first woman was appointed to the Canadian Senate, thanks to the Famous Five. It was 22 more years before women in Quebec could vote in provincial elections. It was another 42 years, 1960, before indigenous women and men on reserves could vote in federal elections. It was another 97 years, 2015, before Canada saw its first gender-balanced cabinet.

Since then, you may have noticed, a lot of work has been done. A lot of work can be attributed to governments, but most of it I think is attributed to those whose tireless advocacy got governments like ours to listen.

I'm here to give you a summary of some of the work that's being done, and I'd be happy to take any questions afterwards.

Let's start with the main estimates.

The main estimates reflect this government's commitment to breaking down barriers to gender equality and to developing strategies to better prevent violence against women and girls. Our $62.3 million allocation in the 2018-19 estimates represents a nearly 60% increase in our overall spending over the previous year.

This increase is very important to us because our role has grown tremendously in the past year or two, and because we need to grow to keep up with the new demands on Status of Women Canada. There's an increased level, as you know, of public focus on the need to end gender bias in all parts of our society. We want and need to build on this momentum.

We will be using the increase in funds to improve the capacity at Status of Women Canada to handle new demands coming from cabinet, Parliament, parliamentary committees, Canadians, the profit sector, and the non-profit sector. Our new responsibilities on GBA+, for example, involve a great deal of coordination with other federal departments and agencies, as well as interactions with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. In many instances, issues stretch across many departmental lines. We don't always own a particular file, so more effort is involved in making sure that the proper inputs are considered. We also need to strengthen our public policy capacity to establish the permanent corporate structures necessary to meet the needs of our clients, and to deliver on our ambitious government priorities.

On gender-based violence, a large part of our increase will directly address the high demand to focus more of our attention and resources on gender-based violence. We're funding many different projects on this issue at local, regional, and national levels, as well as in partnership with indigenous leaders living on and off reserve. The new gender-based violence program—this is the funding envelope—helps organizations in the development and implementation of promising practices in support of survivors of gender-based violence and their families, including underserved populations.

We're also making adjustments to the way we support organizations with potential extensions of project funding from three up to five years, an increase in grants of up to $1 million, and an expansion of eligible groups to include think tanks, organized labour, post-secondary institutions, and others. We're also providing funding for gender-based violence research, data analysis, and surveys to give us a deeper understanding of the true scope of the challenge.

On GBA+, as you know, all measures in budget 2018 were subject to a GBA+ analysis. The budget also included a new gender results framework to guide future decision-making while measuring our progress in creating an economy that works for everyone.

New GBA+ legislation will be introduced this fall to enshrine gender budgeting within the federal budget-making process. We will continue improving the use of GBA+ across the federal organizations that we're responsible for, so that an intersectional gender lens is carefully applied to the government's decision-making on policies, programs, and services. We will also host a national round table on GBA+ later this year to share the results and best practices of these efforts.

An important part of this initiative is making sure that federal employees have the necessary training to carry out GBA+. I am pleased to report that to date, we have been able to build on the GBA+ skills of over 100,000 public servants, parliamentarians, and staff. I thank all of you around this room who have taken the course and have your certificates to prove it.

● (1535)

We are also focusing, like you, on another issue that the committee has studied extensively, addressing the persistent barriers that create economic insecurity for far too many Canadian women every day. The statistics are all too familiar. The stories are familiar to this group as well, as I know you've studied it.

To address this, and as part of our efforts where Status of Women specifically is leading, earlier this month in Alberta I announced $10 million in funding for projects to tackle the root causes of economic insecurity for women by improving their access to jobs and careers. For example, we are funding a project to encourage more women to get involved in aviation. Only 5% of pilots, by the way, are women. Another helps to remove barriers to the job market for those fleeing domestic violence. There are also projects aimed at increasing women's participation in STEM fields.

We also recognize that we are in an era of reconciliation. We need to do business differently, but we also need to work in respectful collaboration and partnership with the first peoples of this land. Last night it was an honour for me to join with colleagues and bring together the first indigenous women's circle to advise Status of Women Canada directly. We recognize that in this era of reconciliation, women hold the key to a lot of the solutions we need. We know there is a lot of strength and resiliency in those communities, and their wisdom will help guide the way for us as this is the most important relationship for our government.

You also are aware that Canada is leading the G7 this year, and gender-based analysis and that intersectional gendered lens is woven through all the important conversations that ministers and leaders will have in Charlevoix in two weeks, and that's an important milestone. Mainstreaming gender into this agenda has never happened before, and I'm grateful to the members of the Gender Equality Advisory Council, Women 7, Youth 7, and Labour 7, who came together, along with other ministerial colleagues, to ensure that the work of the G7 is going to address inequality and focus on equality as a driver for growth.

As we all are, I'm sure, I am proud that the legacy of those who fought for us to have the right to vote 100 years ago is in the hands of many across the country, including those of us who have the privilege of serving as parliamentarians. I am proud of our government's efforts to honour their legacy by continuing to build on the work they've done, and clearly all the work that remains to be seen.

I also appreciate and want to thank every one of you for the work you've done on this committee. I also know that you are tapped to do work on other committees because gender equality, of course, is not just an issue that Status of Women, neither the committee nor the agency, can do alone. Many thanks for the time you are offering me to be here with you today. Two great women from Status of Women Canada are here to provide any technical briefings that this group may wish.

Madam Chair, I am happy to take any questions colleagues may have.

The Chair: That's excellent; thank you.

We're going to begin our first round.

Bernadette Jordan, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

I am going to start, as a member of Parliament for a large rural riding. We recently came back from the UN, where we had the international status of women meetings, and the theme this year was women and girls in the rural economy.

I'm just wondering what our government is doing to help women break down the barriers because there are many barriers for rural women particularly to participate in the economy.

● (1540)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: The Commission on the Status of Women, at which many colleagues around this table were present and thankful for that participation, was an important opportunity to share our best practices as Canadians on the work that is being done to further support women and girls living in rural and remote communities. It was also an important opportunity to learn from other countries. I think we went there with a lot of pride in what we're doing, but also humility, knowing that we have more work to do.

In our case in Canada when we talk about rural communities, we also need to include remote communities. In the Canadian context, the issue of indigenous communities is also part of this. First, the work that's being done to ensure that we apply that intersectional gender lens to all our policies also includes a rural lens being applied. I think that's really important so that this perspective is understood at the onset of the policy-making process and programs.

The second piece that I think is important is the investment in rural broadband. I have a mixed riding, rural and urban, and having that cellular and Internet access is not just important with regard to the economic realities that we know can be consequences of not having it, it's also important for access to resources like services. With regard to social issues like gender-based violence, I was touring some rural communities over the past summer, hearing from women's organizations. We know that those women's organizations are doing more than just supporting gender-based violence survivors and victims. They're employment agencies. They're youth counsel reps. They do all sorts of work. We know through our gender-based violence program, for example, that ensuring that those who serve under-represented groups, like those living in rural communities, need to be prioritized, and we are prioritizing them.

These are just some examples of the work that we're doing. As I said, that work continues. Our rural identity and our rural communities are essential to the well-being of Canada as a whole, especially the women and girls in those communities.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to shift gears a bit here. One of the things we've heard a lot about—and we heard about it at the UN as well—is engaging men and boys in the conversation on gender-based violence. The problem that I've heard from groups in our communities is that women have fought so long and so hard for funding for their organizations and now we're funding men's organizations.

I'm just wondering if you'd like to address that.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: That's an excellent question. Thank you. As you know, we did receive funding, separately from the funding we've received for women's organizations, to engage Canadians in a conversation about how men and boys want to and can be agents for positive change in the conversation around gender equality.

We know that the social norms and the deeply entrenched systemic realities aren't just hurting women and girls. They're also hurting our sons, fathers, and brothers. This isn't about dividing the two. I think it's really important that we recognize that when we support women and girls, and when we talk about how men can be and are agents for positive change, it's also good for all Canadians. The money that we've set aside for the engagement with men and boys, which will take place through the leadership of the parliamentary secretary I'm blessed to work with, Terry Duguid, will begin this summer. The funding is separate and aside from the money that we are supporting women's organizations with.

I've worked with the YWCA. I understand that we're not there yet in fully supporting women's organizations. This is not taking anything away from them, and the women's movement can have that reassurance from me. Again, as we talk about all the ways that funding is required to advance this work, it's also important to be mindful of all of the things that don't cost money.

Men are great role models to other boys and other men, and our individual conduct as women and men and gender-diverse people is actually just as important as the work that we need to do that requires a financial investment.

● (1545)

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Another question I have, Minister, is with regard to sexual assault on university or post-secondary campuses. We know that this is a major problem. I believe I saw a statistic that said that 40% of rapes in Canada happen on campuses. What's being done to address this? Is there anything Status of Women is doing or funding to address this problem?

It's a real concern for young people going off to university. It's a concern for society in general. That 40% is totally unacceptable, so I'm wondering if you'd like to address that.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: We know that over 40% of the reported cases of sexual violence are coming from students. It is absolutely an issue, not just for the students and the overall working and learning environment it creates, but also for parents, who expect that when their kids go off to this important stage in life, they will be safe.

We are working with provinces and territories through new investments in budget 2018. We are investing $5.5 million to come up with a coordinated strategy across post-secondary institutions to address this really important challenge, which is a significant barrier not only to our economy but also to the well-being of our communities. Our gender-based violence strategy as a whole—the first of its kind—also works to address some of these systemic barriers. We know, for example, that there are student unions across the country that have solutions. I've met with administrators across the country who want to be part of the solution. Working in partnership with them is going to be a critical component of our success.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We're now going to move on for seven minutes to Rachael Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you.

Minister, you came to Canada from Iran. You understand that area of our world and some of the challenges that women face there. I've been to northern Iraq and to Jordan. I've talked with women and girls there and seen the atrocities they face in that area.

ISIS is targeting Yazidi women in particular. That's not all, but this group is definitely under persecution, so in June 2016, the UN actually declared what's taking place there a genocide. You'll recall that the Conservative members of the House brought forward a motion calling on the government to bring Yazidi women and girls over to Canada so that they could find a place of refuge here. That motion received unanimous consent. It's reported that the city in which the majority of these women and girls have resettled is the city of Toronto. Interestingly enough, Toronto is also where a known ISIS terrorist by the name of Abu Huzaifa resides. We're talking about a man who openly boasts about having beheaded individuals who were being held captive.

I'm wondering if you can tell us what your government is doing with regard to this in order to protect vulnerable Yazidi women and girls who are living next door, down the street, and within the same city.

The Chair: One moment please.

Pam.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I have a point of order.

We have the Minister here to discuss estimates as they reflect the status of women. While I'm sure she could give us a wonderful answer—because our government has been doing quite a number of things on this issue—I would welcome the member to come to the committee of the whole this evening, when the Minister of Immigration will be taking questions on this. I feel strongly that when we have the Minister for the Status of Women here, we should be dealing with the estimates and issues that are reflective of the status of women.

The Chair: I appreciate that.

Prior to this committee, I confirmed with our clerk and others that when we're dealing with main estimates, we're dealing with anything under the government umbrella, not just specifically with the status of women.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's new. The clerk is saying that when a minister comes to committee, they're open to questions on anything the government is doing?

The Chair: I'm just going to remind Ms. Harder to bring this back to the estimates. It can be anything whole of government, but bring it back to a portion of that, please.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Minister, you stated in your opening remarks that you are putting in place promising practices with regard to cutting back on violence against women and girls.

Yazidi survivors of violence, who are in trepidation and who have been sold into sexual slavery, are being put next door to an ISIS terrorist who is boasting about his actions. How is that advocating for their safety and well-being?

● (1550)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: You're right. I was born an Afghan refugee in Iran. I've seen compassion from Canadians from all walks of life, devoted to ensuring that refugees come to welcoming communities in Canada and that the supports are there. That compassion continues to inspire me; it's an important part of who we are as Canadians, and it's to be applauded.

With respect to ISIS fighters, Canada's police and security agencies work to the highest professional standards every single day to keep Canadians safe. That's true in the case you're referring to and every other case.

With respect to terrorists returning to Canada—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Sorry—

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —our priority is to investigate—

Ms. Rachael Harder: With regard to my question—

The Chair: Order.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I'm answering—

The Chair: Order. The chair has the floor.

I'm sorry, but this is the one thing with this. The time does go to the questioner. That is the protocol on this. I recognize that we don't want interruptions, but at the same time we want to make sure that it can come back.

Pam.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I want to go back to the point of order, because there's nothing in the estimates for the Status of Women about public safety. There is nothing in here about the programs that the government has in place that are supporting Yazidi women and girls —which are many—the many women and girls who have come to Canada who are receiving trauma support and who are receiving support as refugees in Canada. All of those would be covered in the estimates with Immigration, so I'm confused as to how estimates for Status of Women, which has absolutely nothing to do with this, can be part of what we're doing.

The Chair: With all respect, I hear what you're saying, so please don't think that I don't, but I have been advised that it's main estimates. Main estimates can look at all government spending. That's point one.

Point two that I'd like to make on this, when we bring it back.... We've been talking about women and abuse and all those things. If it can be brought back to that study that we have just completed, over one year ago, then we can find some sort of correlation between the two.

I'll ask all panellists and any questioners to make sure that it does come back to estimates and government spending, and then we can go forward from there. Thank you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Can you just clarify for me, though, that estimates from any department can be dealt with at Status of Women? Because I would have thought estimates to deal with immigration would be dealt with at the Immigration committee.

The Chair: We are referring to the votes that are from us.

I will suspend for one moment, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Sorry. Is that a conversation for the whole committee?

The Chair: No, it's not, thank you. We're getting clarification. One moment, please. Thank you.

We're suspending for four minutes.

• _____ (Pause) _____ •

● (1555)

The Chair: We'll reconvene.

I'm just going to remind everybody that, as long as it comes back to the department, we can look at things such as GBA+. Whether it's GBA+ when we're looking at immigration, which can be seen as the whole of government, or we're looking at the funding programs, anything that comes from this department—and GBA+ was born in this department—can be something we can look at, and any of the Status of Women programming, as well as violence against women.

What we're going to be looking at is if these questions are pertinent. The story may be long, but if it gets back to a question that has to do with something the Status of Women has dealt with, especially in the last two and a half years, then I will allow the question to stand.

Yes, Pam.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Just to clarify, pretty much anything at all that has nothing to do with the estimates....

The Chair: The question that she asked had to do with violence against women, and that question stands. That is the ruling of the chair. That question will stand, because it is about violence against young women and girls, and we finished that study. I will allow that question to stand.

● (1600)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you for the question.

I think it's interesting this is—

Ms. Rachael Harder: I have the floor.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Maybe, Madam Chair, you could clarify how much time I have to respond to a question. Is it 35 seconds? Is it a minute? I would love to provide responses; that's why I'm here.

The Chair: The floor is to the questioner. The person who was asking the question gets the floor. It is unlike in the House of Commons, where it's 30 to 35 seconds. Each questioner gets seven minutes provided to them for their questioning. If there are questions that she feels are going offside, then in an appropriate way, we are allowed to cut the person off—that would be you or any of the members of your department—so that we can get back to the line of questioning, because that is the questioner's time. Thank you.

Thus, we go back to Rachel.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The minister and her caucus have shown us that this matter—studying Yazidi women and girls, having them brought into Canada, and the impact that ISIS fighters living next door to them is having on them—is not something that is of concern to you. You've demonstrated that. At a prior committee meeting, members of your caucus demonstrated that. Your government has demonstrated that.

I'm very concerned, because these are survivors of traumatic experiences. My question is simple, and I've asked it before, but I wasn't given an answer, so perhaps you could take 30 seconds and give me an adequate answer today.

Was GBA+ applied when this government decided to bring more than 60 ISIS fighters back into Canada, and put them next door, down the street, or within the same proximity as these women and girls, who are victims of incredible atrocities at the hands of ISIS?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I think it's interesting that this is coming from the member opposite. When there was a vote in the House of Commons to further support settlement services for Yazidi women, the member opposite and indeed the Conservative party voted against it. During the 10 years the Conservatives had in the previous administration, 30 Yazidi women were brought to Canada.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm sorry, thank you very much for your time.

It's interesting, because you asked for the time that you should be going after, and we said 30 seconds, and you continued to give a non-answer, so I'm clearly seeing your commitment to this.

Now, Minister, it's clear your government did not do a GBA+. Had you, I would have expected a different outcome. Here's what I'm hearing. I'm hearing no gender-based—

The Chair: There is a point of order.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Chair, this is a different kind of process. We have the minister today, questions are being asked, and some time should be allocated to the minister to respond. If we don't like the response, I don't think it's appropriate to insult or criticize the response. Moreover, I think a bit of respect should be given to the minister in trying to answer the question—

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: —and not insinuate comments that are unnecessary.

The Chair: I appreciate your ideas.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Every time I come to this committee—

The Chair: I appreciate that very much.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: —I've been to other committees before—

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: —and I'm becoming a bit disgusted—

The Chair: That's fine.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: —seeing how things are going.

The Chair: Okay. Well I hope that—

Mr. Angelo Iacono: So I would like you, Madam Chair—

The Chair: Excuse me, I hope that's not—

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Excuse me, Madam Chair, I would like you, Madam Chair, to take control of this situation and how the comments and the flow of questioning is going. Thank you.

The Chair: I really appreciate your time, but please do not question my chairship. I do not appreciate that, because I try to be extremely fair. As I've indicated before, I was put in the position by the Liberal government, not by my choice, and I will remind you of that once again.

The bottom line is, I will allow up to 30 seconds. If the minister does not begin to answer that question within 30 seconds, I will then allow the person to interrupt.

But once again, please do not question my chairship. Thank you.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Here's what I'm hearing from the minister: I'm hearing that no GBA+ was done, no consultations were done with these women and girls and how it might impact them to bring ISIS militants into Canada. This government has absolutely no understanding with regard to the trauma these women have faced being brutalized at the hands of these ISIS militants who are now being brought into Canada and so-called de-radicalized. I'm hearing that this government by choice is siding with ISIS militants who commit these grave atrocities instead of standing up and speaking out on behalf of these survivors. That, Minister, is an absolute shame.

Here's my next question. The immigration committee recently heard from officials with regard to the settlement of Yazidis and other victims of ISIS. It turns out that according to reports only five Yazidis survivors have accessed individualized trauma counselling in Canada. It turns out that they have little access to translation and interpretation services, and it turns out that almost no access has been given to them for medical treatment, specialized trauma care, or mental health services.

In contrast, the men who brutalized these women or women like them are being welcomed into Canada and put into a so-called de-radicalization program where they're given full access to everything Canadian society has to offer. In fact, according to Minister Goodale, they're receiving mental health services and trauma care as a part of this process.

Minister, why is it more important for your government to protect ISIS militants and make sure that they have access to such services rather than stand up for the victims of these brutalizers and make sure they have the basic care that they require in order to integrate into Canada and start a new life?

● (1605)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Chair, I take issue with all of that. A GBA+ was conducted, as it is with all decisions our government makes. It's a GBA+ that should have been conducted when the previous government decided to cut health care to refugees like Yazidis women. We did support $14 million in funding for settlement, income support, and mental health services to address these most vulnerable refugees. Unfortunately, the member opposite voted against that. We are also working to ensure that ISIS fighters are brought to justice. The previous government brought in 60 of these folks. Zero were convicted or charged.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move on to Ms. Quach.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the minister and the officials from her department for being here. Things are a bit unruly. This is my first time at this committee.

I've had talks with some of the local organizations in my riding, and some national organizations, to find out about their relationship with Status of Women Canada. Those organizations appreciate that the renewal period for grants has been extended from three to five years, because this allows them to plan their activities over a longer period of time. However, several organizations, such as Justice alternative du Suroît, say that applying for grants is very complicated, and that the wait before obtaining any can be very long, from six months to two years. They also stated that it takes a lot of concerted action and partnerships with other organizations in the field, and that they sometimes have to submit projects more than once, which can take up to two years and thus demobilize some organizations.

Can the minister guarantee that the changes that will be made to the Women's Program will decrease the administrative burden that is transferred to those organizations? They must receive funding for their basic operations or activities, and not just assistance for pilot projects or special projects, so that women's concerns may be taken into account at the decision-making level.

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you very much for your question, and for all the work you do to advance equality in the country and beyond.

You're right. The sustainability of the women's movement is critical to the sustainability of all our efforts to ensure that, long after our work as politicians is wrapped up, women's organizations have what they need to continue to move forward on our agendas.

You're right. We are making changes to the way we fund women's organizations. I'll use the example of the gender-based violence funding envelope we announced in January of this year. It's a $20-million envelope, and it is up to five years now. What we decided to do to ease the access of the application for these projects for the women's organizations, based on what they asked for, was to say, don't write the whole application right now. That takes time and resources. Instead, give us your idea. Give us a concept. If it's approved, we will give you up to $30,000 to further develop the project.

We're also more than doubling the funding for women's organizations so that there is actually more to support these important leaders across the country in their work. As you know, a significant part of our effort since we formed government is forming better relationships with provinces and territories. I met with my provincial and territorial counterparts last fall. I'll be meeting with them again this fall. This is an item on our agenda. It's a shared priority for all of us because—especially in the context of #MeToo, and every hashtag that increases the rate of survivors seeking support—we know that the demand on these organizations has also gone up. Part of the supplementary estimates includes further funding for these organizations, and ensuring that those who have willingness to be part of the solution...like unions, for example. They asked to be eligible for these funds, and now they are.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you.

I am going to try again to obtain some clarifications about the time it takes to obtain grants. Some say that it takes a lot of concerted action. Since there has to be a lot of collaboration, and since Status of Women Canada wants to share in the vision involved, one gets the impression that the department already knows where the grants will be going, and that is problematic. In fact, it is often the same organizations in the field that receive grants. I am from a rural area that is somewhat remote, and that is the impression one gets. I'll ask my next question now, but you may also answer that one.

There is also a gap regarding organizations that provide services to girls and young women, particularly those that are transitioning to adulthood, those between 14 and 24. These are organizations such as Justice alternative du Suroît and its Ateliers créactions, in the Montérégie area. The purpose of this project is to identify women from disadvantaged areas who might commit crimes. Since it targets women between 14 and 24, from the outset, Status of Women Canada refused to fund them, because some of their clients were under 18. This led to a shortage of services. We don't know who those young women can turn to, because they have not yet reached the age of majority.

How will Status of Women Canada, which wants to fight violence against women, adjust?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I want to clarify that we do not turn down projects supporting girls. We, in fact, encourage them. Part of the issue you've raised, around different organizations not having access to these dollars, is that the previous government cut down several regional shops representing Status of Women Canada on the ground. These organizations wouldn't otherwise have access to knowing that there is a funding application happening right now, how to apply for it, and what questions and answers they may want to consider in the writing. We've opened up regional offices to address that accessibility barrier.

The time spent on these projects is important. That is why, as I mentioned earlier, we were asking organizations to spend less time, and once their concept is approved we're giving them funds to be able to further develop their projects.

The gaps in services will continue unless we start to do business differently—and we are. I heard this from women's organizations, and we also did a review of the women's program and the way we fund projects. I just want to give you the three recommendations that came out of this review.

The first was that we continue to fund projects that foster systemic change. The second was to increase efforts in knowledge-sharing so that we're not just holding onto these best practices; we're sharing them with other communities. The third was to enhance supports to funding recipients through the project life cycle. These are all issues we have taken into account.

We also have a sustainability envelope in the recent budget. It's $100 million, focused on the sustainability of the organizations we speak of.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move on to Ms. Pam Damoff for seven minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Chair, I'm curious; do you think will we get another round on this side?

The Chair: I don't know.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'll probably share my time with Marc Serré.

The Chair: Fantastic. Just let us know.

Ms. Pam Damoff: With regard to my first question, Minister, I'm really proud that in my riding, Alvin Tedjo, who's a community activist and young father, has been advocating for years for a "use it or lose it" parental leave system. We know from testimony that we've heard, as well as the organization that he heads, the major positive impact that this has on families.

I'm wondering if you could share with us, from budget 2018, how that "use it or lose it" parental leave will help Canadian families.

● (1615)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: We know that in those early days of a new life, being part of a family is critical, for attachment reasons, for caregiving reasons, and for the family to transition to this new reality they find themselves in. I've heard from many fathers who weren't able to be part of those early days, and how they wish they had been. I also hear from fathers who are new parents, those who are able to spend that time together with their newborn, and how much they appreciate this important time.

In budget 2018, we introduced a new EI parental sharing benefit for new Canadian parents. The "use it or lose it" methodology does apply. The idea here is to help families grow into their new roles and new realities, and to provide those financial supports so that they can do that. It's also to ensure that the responsibility for care work, which is often borne by women, is shared more equally across genders and across parents.

This new parental sharing benefit is also intended to help address some of the wage gaps, so that parents can choose who stays and who goes out and works. Also, to go back to the role model conversations that I had, when fathers are seen to be providing that care work, that's a really important change in societal norms. It's required to further enhance gender equality, and it's one way that individuals can be part of the change.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Ms. Damoff. Thank you, Chair.

[*Translation*]

Madam Minister, I thank you very much for your time, for your compassion for women, and for everything you do to support them.

[*English*]

As you are aware, our committee's next study will be on women in politics. In previous studies, we've heard several testimonies on the increasing cyber-violence on social media platforms especially targeting women in politics.

Madam Minister, can you comment on the main barriers that currently exist for women in politics?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you. On this important day, the 100th anniversary of some women receiving the right to vote, I think that question is particularly important.

Yes, we've come a long way, but we also have so far to go. Each of you around this table who's gone through the process has a great deal of expertise in this area, so I'm very much looking forward to your study and I'm very much looking forward to the recommendations. I think our most important job in this place is to inspire the next generation of leaders to come and do the work that we've come here to continue.

I think this study is important in many ways. I know that women in politics experience different barriers. We've heard from so many of them. We know that there are barriers around care work. We know that there are barriers around financial access. We know there are barriers in lack of role models. Unless she can see her, she cannot be her. When little girls see women like those around this table in positions of power and influence, as I can tell you my nine-year-old niece certainly does, they think to themselves: if they can do it, I can too. This is why it is so important for each of us to be mindful of the fact that we are leaders and we are role models and that little girls, boys, and gender diverse individuals are looking up to us to lead by example.

That's why I was saddened and, frankly, disturbed to see a member of the Status of Women committee take it upon herself to send cyber and mail violence to one of our colleagues around this table. That is not the way that public resources ought to be used. That is not the way we are expected to behave as politicians. Sure, we can disagree without being disagreeable. Sure, we can have different ideologies, but the disrespect and the online violence that we perpetrate against one another actually sets all of us back.

In terms of the work being done to further enhance women's leadership capacities, I will say we have a pot of money available—and this was announced last year—to support indigenous women's leadership. We're working with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to support a project or series of projects with them. We've invested close to $20 million in supporting women's leadership capacities, including young women, because they are leading today and they have important ideas that need to be heard. All of that work is being done. Your study will be very much appreciated and very timely, frankly, but unless as individuals we lead by example, we are not going to advance the cause that brings us together around this committee table, which is improving the status of women in Canada.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: I'd like to know what the government has done to support women entrepreneurs, help them develop or purchase businesses, and to contribute to the Canadian economy by encouraging entrepreneurship among women.

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef: A $1.65-billion women entrepreneurship strategy was announced in budget 2018. It includes support for starting up, scaling up, having access to mentorship, and having access to new trade markets. For those living in rural communities, you'll appreciate that through regional development agencies we'll be able to better connect with the needs of individual communities and entrepreneurs who will create jobs for us.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are now going to go on to our second round.

Stephanie Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I find it very rich that you bring this up when you yourself are from a party with numerous cases of sexual harassment in front of it. We the Conservative members take offence at that, so please watch your commentary in what you're saying in regard to the actions of your own party.

Minister, I know that gender-based-violence funding is very important for your government, and I would like to know if you have a specific number of the women and girls who've gone without food and shelter and have suffered significantly as a result of these resources, which I'm sure you had meant to allocate to them, now being reallocated to those who are illegal border crossers.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Resources that are supporting irregular immigrants are not being taken away from others. I want to clarify that.

Gender-based-violence funding is important to all Canadians, not just our government, which is why in this recent budget we more than doubled the funding for organizations to do this work.

As to sexual harassment, I appreciate your bringing that up. Bill C-65 has gone through several iterations, and it recognizes that sexual harassment, violence, and discrimination are not particular to any one group. We know all parties are affected by this. We know all communities and cultures are affected by it, and we are united in our efforts to address it.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Minister. Then I'm sure your members will abide by it once it is in effect.

[*Translation*]

Madam Minister, the federal government allocated $74 million to Quebec to manage the crisis caused by illegal entries at the border and provide necessary resources.

Do you know how much of that amount was specifically earmarked for women and girls?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef: The focus in all our efforts is recognizing that, for example, in migration cases women are particularly vulnerable. It's ensuring that the supports they have are in line with their unique needs and realities and have been taken into account.

I also want to go back to the comment. When I talk about political violence, I'm not talking about sexual violence. There is a spectrum of violence that takes place. All I was saying is if we want to make this world better—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —we all lead by example.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Minister, can you please inform the committee as to the GBA+ process for the illegal border crossers? What GBA+ process is being implemented and enforced for those who are illegally crossing our borders?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: The GBA+ process that our government applies to all policies and proposals that we consider is about 22 years old. It was on the books for the previous government. If they had used it, they would not have cut health care to refugees, they would have let in more than three Yazidis women who were in high need—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Do you mean legally, or illegally, like these border crossers are doing now?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —into this country. The work that we're doing to support irregular arrivals, as well as all immigrants, includes the application of that intersectional gendered lens. We also want to ensure that the organizations that support them have the funding and the capacity to do that work. Of course, we're also working with our provincial counterparts to ensure that our efforts are in alignment.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Minister, in a November 28, 2017 article regarding correcting your birthplace on your citizenship documents, you were quoted as saying, "Just like everybody else, I'm waiting my turn". Based on this very quote, is it feasible to say that your very own family, your very own flesh and blood would have suffered additional hardship and delay as a result—

An hon. member: Madam Chair, please. This is very personal.

● (1625)

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Chair, a point of order.

The Chair: One moment, please. Do not interrupt. I'm standing my ground on this one.

Please make sure that it's relevant to the question and to the main estimates. Thank you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Sorry, Madam Chair, this is a personal attack on another member of Parliament. If she's going to focus on what's in the estimates, that's fine.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Chair, I assure you it's all covered [*Inaudible—Editor*] in a CBC article.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I know. And I've been called a supporter of a terrorist organization by someone over there too, but that doesn't mean we bring it up here.

The Chair: We will suspend.

Thank you very much, Minister. We will change up our panels and begin again at 4:30.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1630)

The Chair: If everybody could please take their seats, we are going to begin once again.

To start, a motion was made that when I suspended I was not allowed to as the chair. To the Liberal caucus, I have control and I'm allowed to suspend when I feel it's necessary. Due to decorum I suspended, rather than calling out people on decorum.

I will take that ability to suspend when I need it, and please do not question the chair once again on why I suspended. Thank you.

We are now coming back for our last hour.

We have Nancy Gardiner—thank you for remaining with us—as well as Anik Lapointe, and Lisa Smylie.

Lisa, why don't you tell us what your role is.

Ms. Lisa Smylie (Director, Research and Evaluation, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women): I'm Director of Research, Planning, Evaluation, and Audit.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to begin once again with a full round of questioning. We're going to start with our seven minutes and go around.

Sean Fraser, you have the first seven minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Just a reminder for anybody who's tuned in back home, with the estimates before us we have an opportunity, as parliamentarians, to scrutinize the spending of the government, and we have the experts here to answer questions. We have to make sure that spending is being done in a sensible way.

There are a few items I wanted to home in on that are included in the estimates. To build on one of the questions my colleague Ms. Jordan asked, about engaging men and boys, I saw a line item in the estimates for $0.9 million. One of the things we heard loud and clear during our committee study on eliminating gender-based violence against young women and girls was that to bring men and boys into the conversation you have to go to where men and boys are talking. The ones who show up the first week on campus at the sexual assault and consent seminar are not likely the ones you need to connect with. You need to break up the so-called locker room talk. How can you assure us that the funds you are allocating to encourage men and boys to promote gender equity in Canada is being spent in a way that's going to reach the men and boys who need it most?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner (Senior Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women): You raise an excellent point around going to the source to get information on how to fix the problem. As the minister mentioned, an amount in the budget was identified for engaging men and boys. That is exactly what is going to happen over the summer. Terry Duguid will be leading the engagement, and going to the sources to see what is required for our men and boys strategy, figuring out from the source the types of programming, resources, and issues being faced by men and boys that would help with this issue. We're looking forward to that opportunity because it will give us the on-the-ground information that's required to develop the types of strategies that would meet the needs of men and boys in addressing the violent situations we are talking about.

Mr. Sean Fraser: That's excellent. Is it safe to say this is perhaps the first tranche of funds that's going to identify strategies to solve the problem that could be followed by further opportunities in future budgetary measures?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I think it's safe to say this is the opportunity to figure out the exact need and how we can address it, depending on that information.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much.

I wanted to move to another budget line item that I've seen here. About $10 million is allocated in the estimates to support women's community organizations. We've heard loud and clear through multiple studies to find the people who are doing the good work, support them in doing it, so I'm encouraged to see that advice seems to have been taken.

I wanted to raise with you two challenges in particular. The first involves the ability to use some of these funds toward the core operating expenses of a community-based organization. The second deals with the length of time these funds go for. We see time and time again really great projects have a one- or a two-year term, and when they prove themselves to be effective they are told they have to come up with a completely new plan. Is this money going to be spent in a way that's going to allow women's organizations to do good work for the long term, and are they going to be able to help keep the lights on, so to speak, with the funding that's been made available?

● (1635)

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I've worked a long time in terms of not-for-profit organizations, not with the Status of Women but with other departments, and I've seen that issue being raised across many sectors, I'd say.

The funding that has been announced is looking at the sustainability of women's organizations. I think that's an issue that's been raised to the department over the long period of time that the agency has been in existence. For these organizations, as you've said, it's important for them to have that solid base of support so they can do the work they do on the ground. That sustainability is exactly what it's focusing on. They will have access to funds that will support their capacity.

As the minister stated earlier, it's a longer-term length of time for these projects to be in place, and not the one-year project-based funding. We're looking at a period of five years. That would allow organizations to have that stability they need to do the work they do every day, as well as potentially applying for other types of program funding that look at project-based funding.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I expect I only have time for perhaps one more question, or maybe two if they're very brief.

One of the other line items I see is half a million dollars set aside for "Improving Support for Sexual Assault Crisis Centres on Campuses".

We had a chapter of our gender-based violence study dedicated to the campus culture, the rape culture that permeates society. Women are seeking to gain an education, yet face this barrier of a threat of sexual violence. It absolutely astounded me when I heard about the risks faced by young women who are entering colleges and universities.

Frankly, half a million dollars doesn't seem like enough money to solve this problem. Can you give me some confidence that this is money that's perhaps, like the men and boys initiative, going to help identify the problems and solutions, so that with follow-up funding opportunities we can actually make the difference we need to make?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I have to say that having just started working at Status of Women, I am a little fearful with a daughter going to university in September. You know a lot more information on this point.

That amount of money is for this fiscal year. The total amount for campus-based violence is $5.5 million over a period of time. It's the very beginning part of the actual initiative. Then, as the minister talked about, we'll be able to work with our provinces and territories and with our stakeholders that know this issue very well to determine what a strategy, a framework, could look like for university and college campuses across the country.

I think working with our partners is critical in this, because those players are main contributors to working with the universities on the ground. Actually determining what a framework could look at is critical for us to have the right supports in place for those folks on campus.

Mr. Sean Fraser: That's excellent.

I have about 30 seconds left. I'll use it to say thank you. The work you do is incredibly valuable. I appreciate what it's going to look like with the increased resources over the next decade.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Nancy, thank you for sharing your personal story as well. It's good to know that we're all in it together as parents.

I'm going to carry on now with Stephanie Kusie for her seven minutes.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Chair.

Of course, as a woman, I'm very excited to see that this year's budget and therefore the estimates, of course, were in regard to women, since I am a woman and since I support women.

However, I am very concerned—I've stated this previously in committee—about the outcomes that these types of budgets have historically had. In Australia, this type of budget was abandoned in 2014. In Austria, we saw a third party auditor review this type of budget, with no data coming out that women were in fact much better off. Also, in a study of several OECD countries, only half were shown to have some type of measurable improvement in the lives of women in their nations with these types of budgets that were implemented.

I asked the minister this question the last time she was here and it wasn't addressed at all. As someone who is very proud to have managed million-dollar budgets for the government in my previous role as a management consular officer for missions abroad, and as someone who prides herself on having a Master of Business Administration—like many of my colleagues in the House, I'm sure, who also have many designations—I'm wondering if you can please identify specifically the metrics by which this budget and these specific portions relevant to the Status of Women will be measured.

I think the Canadian public is very excited to see this budget, but they will need the evidence, the proof. The government talks all the time about being a science-based government, a data-based government, so what are the metrics that we can look for and the tools that will be used to see the positive outcomes, the benefits, and the results for this budget, please?

● (1640)

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I will just start by saying that the budget outlined many initiatives, including some specifically for Status of Women. As for the programming piece, I think we've been pretty clear in terms of the outcomes for that type of programming specifically.

The budget also raised the bar, I would say, on gender budgeting, and the focus on results is really clear. The gender results framework is going to guide the results of the measures that have been put into the budget. I'll just ask Lisa to speak to some of the specifics around that.

Ms. Lisa Smylie: As Nancy said, this budget released a gender results framework. The intent of that framework is to articulate what we're trying to achieve on gender equality, and how we're going to know we have gotten there—what the measures of success are.

There are six pillars to the framework, and under those six pillars there are key indicators that we're going to pay attention to and monitor over time to see how successful we've been in achieving those goals. Those indicators are published in the budget, and those are the success measures that we will monitor.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Could you expand on what they are, specifically? What are they relative to? We can certainly set our own objectives relative to what is.... I guess I'm saying that we can create artificial numbers to make ourselves feel good, but how will we really know that this has had a positive impact on women and, furthermore, on society?

Perhaps you could further outline those pillars for me, please.

Ms. Lisa Smylie: I'd be very happy to, absolutely.

For example, under the pillar of education and skills development, we've indicated in the framework that we want to see equal opportunities and diversified paths in education and skills development. We want to see more diversified educational paths and career choices. In terms of indicators that we'll pay attention to, we want to look at the proportion of post-secondary qualification holders who are women by field of study and qualification type, the proportion of post-secondary students who are women by field of study and credential type, and high school completion rate by gender and for under-represented groups, including indigenous peoples.

We also want to see reduced gender gaps in reading and numeracy skills amongst youth, including indigenous youth. We'll look at indicators—such as high school reading and mathematic test scores—by gender, including those for indigenous peoples.

We'd like to see equal lifelong learning opportunities for adults, so we'll pay attention to indicators such as—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Lisa, pardon me.

Are there numeric scores tied to those, or is it aspirational? Is it percentile? If scores improve 30%...or are we aiming for a minimum 65% standard? I mean, that's just a bare example.

I'm sorry, but what was the first phrase you read at the beginning of your explanation, which is very detailed, and I'm appreciative of it?

Ms. Lisa Smylie: The first thing that I said was that, in terms of the goal statement for education and skills development, we'd like to see equal opportunities in diversified—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Equal opportunities. Pardon me. Even that just seems so subjective and very vague for me in terms of what opportunities would be defined as. That's certainly more difficult to measure.

Going back to the second question, are there numerical scores, data, or quantifiable ways to measure these things you talk about as an example of one pillar, just to use it as an example across the budget?

● (1645)

Ms. Lisa Smylie: For most of the indicators in this framework, we do have data available from a number of sources. I will give you an example. Under the gender-based violence pillar, we have indicators related to self-reported incidents of violent crime. We have indicators related to sexual assault reported to police. We certainly have that data available from Statistics Canada.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: In terms of the reduction you're hoping for—

The Chair: Excellent.

Lisa and Steph, we're a little over the seven minutes, so thank you very much.

We're now going to move to Ms. Quach for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank all of you for being here.

I'd like to ask about the strategy regarding campuses. Earlier the minister said that a strategy would be deployed. In fact, there will be a five-year study. So for the moment, there really isn't any plan to help girls and women on campuses who are victims of sexual assault.

However, Budget 2018 indicated that the government might decrease transfers to universities that do not put an action plan in place, but only as of 2019. Could that measure be put in place now, in 2018?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: You are correct. It's not a strategy that's going to be implemented right away. As the minister stated, the idea is for us to work with our partners, the provinces and territories, and organizations that work with students on campuses, to determine the best framework to put in place to allow us to have a strategy that would respond to some of the challenges that have been faced on university campuses.

At this point, we are just beginning. That work will begin over the summer in order to enable us to develop what that strategy really looks like. It has to respond to the partners that we're working with as well, because a lot of those folks have direct relationships with the students on the ground, and the students themselves play a really critical role in developing what this framework is going to look like.

There has been a lot of work developed already by organizations. The idea of this whole strategy would be a national framework, but for it to be enabled at the campus level. I think that would meet the needs of the students as well as the organization they're working in.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: In fact, I was talking about the fact that the government may reduce transfers to universities that put nothing in place to help women who are victims of violence.

Could that measure be put into effect immediately?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: At this point, the focus is on developing the strategy and the framework, and that's the focus of our work at Status of Women right now. It is working with partners to develop the strategy and the framework.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: A report tabled by the Our Turn organization showed that many universities have policies in place to fight sexual assaults on campus, but that some of them, such as Concordia, have significant gaps. Some universities, despite adopting a policy, seem to work against the victims, in a way. In certain cases they even may blame them.

Could the federal government clamp down on those universities?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: As I said, the focus of this work, with the money that was allotted through the budget, is to develop a strategy and a framework that would respond to the needs of students on campus and to allow organizations, universities, and college campuses to have the tools that they need to be able to respond to some of the issues that they have been presented.

We're familiar with the work that has been done by Our Turn. There has been a lot of great work by that organization as well as others, including the provinces, that outline some of the things that need to be put in place. It's not a holistic framework that we would like to see across the country. We wouldn't work independently to have that completed; we would work with our partners to allow us to do that.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Earlier I discussed the funding needed by women's community organizations in order to operate. These organizations have to face many administrative difficulties. Women's groups say that it is not easy to obtain funding because they must, among other things, bid on calls for tender.

The core funding is used to hire personnel, pay the rent, do renovations, help alleviate the shortage of spaces in shelters to reduce wait times, and so on. We met with representatives of the CALACS La Vigie, which is in Sallaberry-de-Valleyfield, in the Montérégie area. In an area that encompasses five RCMs, that organization is the only one that provides help to women who are victims of violence or sexual assault. At this time, in the wake of the #MeToo movement, all of the women who turn to this organization are faced with six-month wait times, because there are only four women who provide this service.

Would it be possible to guarantee that these groups would no longer have to bid on calls for tender in order to be able to fulfil their basic mission?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I completely appreciate where you're coming from in terms of having worked with not-for-profit organizations on the ground for many, many years, and I definitely have heard the issues around the administrative burden that organizations sometimes face when they are applying for projects within federal, provincial, and territorial governments.

The goal that we have now is to make that process as simple as possible, while maintaining the integrity and the controls that need to be put in place. Realistically, we want to make it simple for those organizations to not waste the very limited resources that they have to work with the women on the ground, who need their help, but rather to focus really on that work and not on the administration.

The streamlining of the process, the application itself, and enabling them to not have to submit an application that's going to be 30 pages long, but a simple—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: My question is about the basic mission, and not necessarily about funding for projects.

Could these organizations be given funding to accomplish their basic mission, without having to submit bids?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have about 15 seconds.

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: The question raised earlier is basically around that. Is this funding related to the sustainability and capacity of those organizations? Yes, that's the type of funding that will be available to them, through a process. There will be a process where they actually submit an application but we're hoping it will be a very streamlined application.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

We're now going to move on to Eva Nassif, for your seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the witnesses who have come to talk to us about the work they do.

From one year to the next, we see that there is an increase in grants and contributions related to the activities of Status of Women Canada. Does this cover the increase in the operational costs of Status of Women Canada, or does it allow Status of Women Canada to fund more projects?

Is the increase due to an increase in expenses, or will it be used to fund more projects?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: The additional support money that was provided through budget 2018 is essentially a doubling of the amount available in grants and contributions dollars to organizations. We have approximately $20 million now. The budget announced $100 million over five years to enable us to provide that support to organizations. There is a small operating cost that the agency takes to allow us to continue our operations but the vast majority of that money would go to the organizations. Essentially it would enable us to potentially double the number of organizations that could access funding.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

I'd like us to discuss the increase in operational expenses as compared to the ones from last year. There should be an announcement that Status of Women Canada will become a full-fledged department.

In light of the government's commitment to this, can you tell us how this change will affect Status of Women Canada's ability to fulfil its mandate? May we expect a more diversified portfolio of projects?

● (1655)

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: It's a very exciting time for Status of Women Canada. I have not been with SWC very long but I would have to say that our ability to become a full department provides us with the stability and the support we need to operate as a full department. Having staff available to work with organizations that require support, having a full minister and a full deputy minister, and playing that interlocutor role with other departments, all are quite critical. I think that really puts Status of Women Canada in a good position to continue working on the ground with organizations that need our support.

At this point, we feel very strongly that this is a very positive opportunity for Status of Women Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: We see an increase in the number of positions. They will increase from 99 to 214 in 2019-20. The number of employees will more than double.

Ms. Anik Lapointe (Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director, Corporate Services, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women): Yes.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: In the 2018 budget allocations, an amount of $1.9 million is earmarked for a national conversation on gender equality with young Canadians.

Can you tell the committee how this will be done? I'd like you to tell us about the objective of this conversation and how this project will be managed nationally.

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: There are a couple of points in your question.

You are correct in terms of the additional resources for Status of Women. It will increase the capacity of the organization to enable us, as I said earlier, to work with organizations and to provide the support that's required to other departments. Having more resources going to organizations also requires resources with Status of Women to support them on the ground. We would like to play a role of enabling and working with organizations to allow them to connect with other partners, to connect with other funding sources. For us to be able to do that requires additional resources, so we're happy about that.

With regard to the consultation processes you mentioned, we talked about men and boys earlier, and we talked about GBA+. We're also talking about the youth round table as well. It's another engagement process that will enable us to bring young people together. Work is under way to finalize details of what that would look like. The goal is to bring young people from across the country together to understand some of the issues they've been dealing with, to allow them to discuss amongst themselves how the work that we do could help advance the work they see as important for status of women and for gender equality.

As I said, the details of that exact project and that round table are in the works, in terms of being finalized and developed.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You want to involve all of the educational systems of the provinces and territories. So this approach could be national, and could include the provinces, since education, that of boys and young men in this case, is provided in schools. Since we are talking about an area of provincial jurisdiction, there will surely be discussions with the provinces and territories, correct?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: As the minister said, there's a forum of ministers for Status of Women. She met with them in October of last year, and she will be meeting in October of this coming year as well.

We're working closely in partnership with the provinces and territories on issues that impact both of us. Not at the political level but at the bureaucratic level, there are also working groups that enable us to advance some of those working projects, including things like funding for organizations. It's an issue that the provinces face as well. As you mentioned, some of the things we are talking about impact younger folks who are in the school systems.

Really, it's a requirement to work together with the provinces and territories, because there is some really keen interest in both parties to partner on a lot of these pieces of work.

● (1700)

The Chair: You have about ten seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: I sincerely thank you for the work that you do.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we're going to move on to round two. We are starting off with our five-minute round.

We'll go to Rachel Harder, for five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: The current government has been criticized by the Parliamentary Budget Officer with regard to a slush fund it has created. It's a slush fund of $7 billion that the Liberals want us to approve in vote 40.

Now, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has raised some concerns with this, because it removes power from the elected House. Normally something like this spending would go through full scrutiny. As parliamentarians, we would have an opportunity to speak to it and to understand exactly where that spending is going. Measures would be put in place in order to measure whether or not the intended purposes are being met.

However, because the $7 billion is simply being put aside in this nice little pot full of cash for this government to use however and whenever they want, it could be used for, let's say, a limo ride or an India trip or a private island vacation. These are things we've seen before, so we could certainly see more of them in the future.

Accountability is an essential thing. I'm wondering if you can help me understand vote 40 and make sense of it. Your department is being allocated $24 million for the 2018-19 fiscal year. I'm wondering if you can tell me what specific programs are being funded.

Ms. Anik Lapointe: We have $10 million for the enhancement of the women's program to support a strong sustainable women's movement. We have $5.5 million to expand the gender-based violence program under the strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence. We have $500,000 to establish a national framework to address gender-based violence at post-secondary institutions. We have $1.9 million to lead a national conversation on gender equality with young Canadians and to host a round table on gender-based analysis plus. There is $855,000 to develop an engagement strategy for men and boys that promotes gender equality. Finally, we have $5 million to implement an evidence-based policy approach to advancing gender equality, guided by the gender results framework.

We cannot spend the money on other things than that.

Ms. Rachael Harder: . To my colleague's point earlier, are there metrics being put in place in terms of whether or not these goals or objectives are being met, and if so, what are those metrics?

Ms. Anik Lapointe: These amounts have to go through the Treasury Board approval process and with each Treasury Board submission there is an annex for the gender results and a commitment from the deputy minister to achieve the results that are set.

Ms. Rachael Harder: When someone applies for this funding then, are they being held accountable with regard to whether or not they are delivering, and if so, how?

Ms. Anik Lapointe: We have departmental results for which we have to report on our spending at year end, and the estimates process is for the whole amount that Status of Women is receiving.

I think Nancy wants to add to that.

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I can add just a little bit. When organizations apply for funding, there is a requirement in terms of what results they will achieve, which are outlined in agreements that organizations sign. Once an organization receives an amount of money from government, there is a process where there is an assessment. There is a review. We do monitoring based on the risk of projects. For organizations, it's really clear in the agreements that they sign what results they are to achieve and what the deliverables are. That's what project officers in our department would work with organizations to ensure is being delivered.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay. Specifically with regard to the $1.9 million that's going to a national conversation on gender equality with young Canadians, can you break down for me how this money will be spent in order to pull this off and what your measurables are?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: At this point, as I said earlier, we're in the process of figuring out what that actual project is going to look like and how it's actually going to be achieved. That money would be broken down specifically, as Anik said, to be used for that specific project. We're not able to use that money for other things. It would be to enable young people to attend and to hire facilitators. It's that type of support that will be required to carry out that project.

● (1705)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay. Would the same be true for engaging men and boys? Are there metrics there? Is there a way of measuring the results?

Ms. Lisa Smylie: Just adding to my colleague's previous response, there are metrics. There are performance indicators that we commit to with every initiative, and more to your point, in terms of metrics, there are targets as well that are committed to in terms of those indicators.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

We're going to take our last five minutes with Bernadette.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: I'm transferring my time to Pam, please.

The Chair: Fantastic. What I'm going to do, because we'll have excess time, is to give each group one question each, just so we can use our time efficiently.

Go ahead, Pam.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks, Chair.

A few months ago I held a roundtable in my riding with women entrepreneurs. Minister Chagger came down and we had a conversation about some of the challenges they faced in terms of running their own businesses. We heard about challenges with financing.

One of the things I heard about was scaling up their businesses. They seemed to feel they had support to start their businesses but they needed some support to scale up their businesses. When I saw the budget I was really quite pleased with a number of measures that were in there that spoke directly to what those women around the table had said to me. I wonder if you could just elaborate on some of the many measures that were in that budget supporting women who are running their own small businesses.

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: It is an area that we hear a lot about, in terms of the challenges women face with regard to being entrepreneurs.

We are working closely with our partners at ISED to focus on the women entrepreneurship initiative and strategy that was announced in budget 2018.

Really, there are two pillars that focus on helping their businesses grow. Women-led business growth is really important, and allowing women to have the skills they need is something that you heard about in your round table and something we've heard over and over again. Increasing access to capital is another area that has been a problem and an issue for young women starting their own businesses, so that is something that is going to be allowed or focused on through ISED, through BDC.

Innovation is another area, so the third pillar is improving access to federal business innovation programming. Really looking at how under-represented groups are accessing this is really important. We have heard also that in terms of entrepreneurship, it is an area of draw for indigenous women because it allows not only indigenous women but women generally to create that balance between family and....

Data knowledge is the fourth pillar that they're focusing on. It will allow women to basically have access to best practices and to share data to enable them to succeed in starting up their businesses. We're looking forward to that work with them.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I know there was a specific in there about the Business Development Bank and some of the things they're doing. Do you have any information on that? We had testimony at committee here about women who go to get a loan, and they're asked if their husband can co-sign for them. It's certainly been a challenge for women to obtain that financing in the first place.

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: It has. It's definitely one of the pillars in terms of increasing access to capital, and BDC is providing $1.4 billion in financing, which is a first of its kind, and increasing the women in technology fund to $200 million, up from $70 million. Both those pieces and measures would enable women to have a larger access to that capital. It's not only the access to the capital, like you said, though, it's the supports that women need around that. The first pillar of that strategy is helping women allow their business to grow and to break down those barriers that they face accessing the supports and the capital that they need to start their businesses.

● (1710)

Ms. Pam Damoff: There was also something in the budget for women who are running a small business to be able to share best practices and have a sort of boot camp for entrepreneurs. Maybe that is what it was called, but something along those lines, to be able to get access to the expertise that's out there.

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I believe that's the fourth pillar of their strategy in terms of accessing best practices and data. They're in the process of developing that strategy at this point to see how that would work, but it is access to a boot camp. There are a lot of measures available, I think, across the country to varying degrees. Their hope is to elevate that level of expertise and information to enable all women to have access to that type of support.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

The Chair: We're voting on votes 1 and 5 of the main estimates.

What we're going to do is allow one member from each party to ask one question.

I would like to stay within a minute and a half for question and answer.

Ms. Quach, we're going to start with you. You have 90 seconds for one question with one answer.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We learned that the budget would contain changes to the criteria used to award grants to community organizations. However, cabinet has not yet authorized these changes. Consequently, community organizations are having some trouble with their planning.

Can you tell us whether cabinet will approve these criteria before the end of June, so that the organizations will know what to expect before the beginning of September?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I can't say for sure.

I'm not in a position to say yes or no to that question. We'll be prepared as a department to implement the strategy to allow the money to go out the door as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: How is it that cabinet has not yet approved these criteria even though they are in the budget?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: What was in the budget is a statement in terms of $20 million a year for five years to allow us to support the sustainability of women's organizations. Those are very broad statements, so what cabinet will approve will be more details around how that would work.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Quach.

I'm now going to move over to Stephanie Kusie for your 90 seconds.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Madame Chair.

Beyond the harassment cases that I mentioned earlier today on the other side of the House, I think it's very unfortunate that we've seen an incredible amount of disrespect towards our chair today.

I do note that a large envelope of funding has been put towards engaging men and boys to promote gender equality. How much of this $24 million will be allocated to educating the men and the boys of the Liberal caucus?

Thank you.

Ms. Anik Lapointe: Budget 2018 proposes to invest $1.8 million over two years, starting in 2018-19, to develop an engagement strategy for men and boys that promotes equality and pilots innovative, targeted approaches to addressing inequality.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

The Chair: Marc Serré, you have 90 seconds for a question and answer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is about statistics. In several other committees, we've heard that statistics are inadequate for quite a few organizations, in various places.

Where does the department collect its statistics? Does Statistics Canada need additional resources in order to be able to gather more statistics?

I'd like to know to what extent we need to have more statistics in order to improve the situation, in your view.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Smylie: As a department, we hear quite frequently what you just noted, that the statistics don't exist. In many cases, the statistics do exist; folks just don't know where to access those statistics, for example, to do a GBA+. One of the things committed to in the budget is to implement initiatives to enhance access to those statistics. There was money in the budget for Statistics Canada to establish a new centre for gender diversity and inclusion statistics so that it can increase access to statistics that would be relevant to gender equality, diversity, and inclusion more broadly.

● (1715)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd really like to thank today's panellists for coming and providing us with that intel on everything that's going on in the department.

We're now going to move on to the votes. We need to vote on votes 1 and 5 today, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the main estimates for the fiscal year of 2018-19.

THE OFFICE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR, STATUS OF WOMEN

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$36,873,996

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....$22,680,000

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report the votes on the main estimates to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Fantastic.

The next meeting is going to be on Tuesday. We're going to be continuing with the consideration of the draft. The analyst has sent out more information to you, so you all should have everything for working on Tuesday.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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